

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior listings:

1. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier for mounting onto a rear component of a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle trunk lid or door, comprising:

- a frame having lower engagement means engageable with a lower area of the vehicle component;

- a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying one or more items of equipment;

- at least one vehicle engaging member, connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for engaging the vehicle component at a position above said lower area;

- a strap member having upper engagement means for engagement with an upper area of the vehicle component;

- at least one support ~~connected to the frame or forming part thereof,~~
provided with that includes strap engaging and tensioning means, which are engaged by wherein said strap member is engaged with the strap engaging and tensioning means and can be controlled for tensioning the strap member in order to tighten said upper and lower engagement means onto said upper and lower areas, respectively, of the vehicle component; and

an adjustable position engagement arrangement between the frame and the support, wherein the adjustable position engagement arrangement is configured and arranged to enable the vertical position of the support relative to the frame to be adjusted in order to vary the location of the strap member relative to the frame.

2. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 1, wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means comprise a mechanism for holding the strap member in any set position relative to said support, a strap tensioning member for applying tension to said strap member, and a release control member for releasing said

- 5 mechanism in order to enable free movement of the strap member relative to said support.

3. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 2, wherein said mechanism is a ratchet mechanism.

4. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 1, wherein said vehicle engaging member for engaging the vehicle component is mounted to said support.

5. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier for mounting onto a rear component of a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle trunk lid or door, comprising:

- a frame having lower engagement means engageable with a lower area of the vehicle component;
- 5 - a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying one or more items of equipment;
- at least one vehicle engaging member, ~~connected to the frame or forming part thereof,~~ for engaging the vehicle component at a position above said lower area;
- 10 - a strap member having upper engagement means for engagement with an upper area of the vehicle component;
- at least one support connected to the frame or forming part thereof, provided with strap engaging means, ~~which are permanently engaged by~~ wherein said strap member is secured to said strap engaging and tensioning means, and are also
- 15 ~~adapted for storing the strap member within said support in a wound or folded configuration; and~~
- wherein the vehicle engaging member is secured to the support such that the support is located between the frame and the vehicle engaging member.

6. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 5, wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means are ~~is~~ in the form of strap winding means.

7. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 6, wherein the strap winding means ~~comprise~~ comprises a mechanism for holding the strap winding means in any set condition, a strap tensioning member for controlling the mechanism

- in order to apply a tension to the strap member, and a release control member to
- 5 release the mechanism in order to enable unwinding of the strap member from said strap winding means.

8. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 7, wherein said mechanism is a ratchet mechanism.

9. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 5, wherein ~~said vehicle engaging member for engaging the vehicle component is mounted to said support~~ said support defines an interior within which the strap is stored in a wound configuration by the strap engaging means.

10. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier for mounting onto a movable rear component of a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle trunk lid or door, comprising:

- 5 - a frame having ~~lower engagement means engageable with an upper~~ portion and a lower portion, wherein the lower portion of the frame terminates in a lower hook arrangement that is configured to engage a lower area of edge defined by the movable vehicle component, wherein the frame and the lower hook arrangement are configured such that engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of the movable vehicle component is operable to rigidly connect the lower
- 10 portion of the frame to the movable vehicle component;

- a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying one or more items of equipment;

- at least one vehicle engaging member, connected to the frame or forming part thereof, ~~for engaging, wherein the vehicle engaging member is located above the lower hook arrangement and is configured to engage the movable vehicle component at a position above said lower area of edge of the movable vehicle component;~~ and
- 15 component; and

- a strap member ~~engaged with a support on said frame and having interconnected with the frame via a strap member support, wherein the strap member~~

20 | includes upper engagement means for engagement with an upper area of edge defined
by the movable vehicle component;

- wherein the vehicle engaging member is pivotally mounted with
respect to interconnected with the frame around via a pivot connection that defines a
transverse pivot axis, so that wherein, when the carrier is mounted on the vehicle by

25 | engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of the movable
vehicle component and engagement of the strap member upper engagement means
with the upper edge of the movable vehicle component, with the vehicle engaging
member engaged with the movable vehicle component at a location therebetween,

tensioning the strap member induces a tilting action on said frame around said

30 | transverse pivot axis which causes the lower engagement means hook arrangement of
said frame to be urged against the lower area-edge of the movable vehicle component.

11. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 10, wherein said vehicle
engaging member is in form of a rocking member having a mid portion pivotally
supported around said pivot axis by said frame and two end portions to which vehicle
engaging feet are pivotally connected.

12. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 11, wherein said rocking
member is U-shaped.

13. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim ~~12~~10, wherein
each hook-carrying member the lower hook arrangement is mounted on the
associated interconnected with a forwardly facing end of defined by the lower portion
of said frame so as to be able to perform a limited rotation with respect to said
5 | forwardly facing end.

14. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 12, wherein said
frame includes at least one upright section, and wherein said strap member support is
mounted on a respective one of said upright sections section by connecting means
enabling an adjustment of the position of said support along said upright section.

15. (Withdrawn - Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 14, wherein each upright section has ~~forwardly facing~~ spaced indentations selectively engageable by said connecting means.

16. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 14, wherein said connecting means ~~are in form of~~ comprises clamp means carried by said support and adapted to be tightened around said upright section at any position thereof by means of a tightening screw.

17. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 16, wherein each upright section has a forwardly facing flat surface engageable by said tightening screw of said clamp means in order to prevent rotation of the support relative to the upright section.

18. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 16, wherein said support has a supporting structure in form of a U-bent metal sheet surrounding a rearwardly facing portion of the upright section and having two cut-away portions defining said clamp means, which are engageable by said tightening screw forwardly of said upright
5 section.

19. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim ~~13~~ 10, wherein said frame comprises a pair of upright section and a cross member extending therebetween, and wherein the means for mounting the equipment-carrying structure which are provided on structure for carrying the one or more items of equipment is
5 interconnected with said cross-member ~~comprise via~~ an array of angularly spaced axial ridges arranged around the cross-member and extending longitudinally therealong, and wherein the structure for carrying the one or more items of equipment includes at least one equipment carrying arm having a hub section with an inner surface having an array of longitudinal angularly spaced teeth which are engageable
10 with said ridges, to connect said arm to said cross-member at different desired orientations.

20. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 19, wherein said ridges are formed on an engagement member surrounding said cross-member.

21. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 20, wherein said engagement member surrounding the cross-member has a split construction.

22. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 19, wherein said hub section has a split construction.

23. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 3, wherein said support has a through passage through which said strap member is engaged, said strap member having a series of one-way teeth, and wherein said ratchet mechanism includes a toothed strap retainer pivotally mounted to said support and
5 elastically biased to a position in which its teeth engage the teeth of the strap member, so as to enable movement of the strap member in a tensioning direction and
| preventing-prevent movement of the strap member in ~~the~~ a direction opposite the
| tensioning direction.

24. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 23,
| wherein said strap tensioning member is in form of a tensioning lever pivotally
| mounted on said support and having a series of one-way teeth engageable with said
| teeth of the strap member, said lever being operable to have an active tensioning
5 movement from a first position to a second position, where it causes tensioning of the
| strap member, and an inactive return movement from the second position to the first
| position, during which the strap retainer holds the strap member in the previously
| reached position.

25. (Withdrawn) A carrier as set forth in claim 24, wherein said release control member is in form of a trigger member which can be actuated in order to move said strap retainer away from its position engaging the strap member.

26. (Withdrawn) A carrier as set forth in claim 23, wherein said support has a split construction.

27. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 8, wherein said strap winding means include a strap winding roller rotatably mounted to said support, on which the strap member can be wound, and wherein said ratchet mechanism includes at least one ratchet wheel carried by said winding roller and

- 5 | having a series of one-way teeth, and a retainer having a series of teeth which is
| pivotally mounted to said support and elastically ~~biased~~ biased to a position in which
| ~~its the teeth of the retainer~~ engage the teeth of the ratchet wheel, so as to enable a
| rotation of the wheel in a strap winding tensioning direction and preventing an
| opposite rotation of the wheel.

28. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 27, wherein said
| strap tensioning member is in form of a lever pivotally mounted on said support and
| provided with a toothed pawl pivotally connected to ~~the structure of~~ said tensioning
| lever and elastically biased to a position in which it engages the teeth of the ratchet
5 | wheel, said lever being operable to have an active movement from a first position to a
| second position, where-in which said pawl causes rotation of the ratchet wheel in the
| strap winding tensioning direction, and an inactive return movement from the second
| position to the first position, during which the retainer holds the ratchet wheel in the
| previously reached position.

29. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 28, wherein said release
control member is in form of a trigger member which can be actuated in order to move
said retainer away from its position engaging the ratchet wheel.

30. (Withdrawn) A carrier as set forth in claim 24, wherein said support
is mounted on an upright section forming part of the carrier frame, and wherein said
tensioning lever is pivotally mounted to said support around an axis located forwardly
of said upright section, and has a body extending rearwardly of the upright section,
5 | with a through passage through which the upright section is arranged.

31. (Withdrawn) A carrier as set forth in claim 30, wherein said release
control member is in form of a trigger member arranged on said support forwardly of
the upright section and operable by pulling it rearwardly.

32. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier arrangement for
| mounting onto a movable rear component of a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle
| trunk lid or door that is movable relative to the vehicle between an open position and a
| closed position, comprising:

- 5 - a frame having a lower engagement meansportion that terminates in a
lower hook arrangement that is engageable with a lower area of edge defined by the
movable vehicle component;
- a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying
one or more items of equipment;
- 10 - at least one pivotable vehicle engaging member located above the
lower hook arrangement, connected to the frame or forming a part thereof, for
engaging the vehicle component at a position above said lower area of edge of the
movable vehicle component,
- a strap member having an upper engagement meanshook arrangement
15 for engagement with an upper area of edge defined by the movable vehicle
component,
- at least one support connected to the frame or forming part thereof,
provided with strap engaging means which are permanently engaged by said strap
member, so that said strap member constitutes an integral part of said carrier
20 arrangement, whereby the latter said carrier arrangement can be mounted on a vehicle
with no need of additional separate strap members; and
wherein, when the carrier arrangement is secured to the movable vehicle
component by engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of the
movable vehicle component, engagement of the upper hook arrangement with the
25 upper edge of the movable vehicle component, and engagement of the pivotable
vehicle engaging member with the movable vehicle component at a location between
the upper and lower edges of the movable vehicle component, the carrier arrangement
is movable along with the movable vehicle component when the movable vehicle
component is moved between the open position and a closed position.

33. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 19, wherein said equipment
carrying structure is selected among a number of different structures adapted to carry
different items of equipment, such as bicycles, skis, snowboards, pieces of luggage.

34. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 1, wherein said frame includes a pair of upright sections, a cross-member which interconnects the upper ends ~~of~~ defined by said upright sections and is provided with means for mounting the equipment-carrying structure, curved lower sections extending from the lower ends of the upright sections, and terminating in forwardly facing ends, and a hook carrying member mounted to each of said forwardly facing ends and including a hook, wherein each hook is configured to engage a lower edge defined by the vehicle component.

35. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 5, wherein said frame includes a pair of upright sections, a cross-member which interconnects the upper ends ~~of~~ defined by said upright sections and is provided with means for mounting the equipment-carrying structure, curved lower sections extending from the lower ends of the upright sections, and terminating in forwardly facing ends, and a hook carrying member mounted to each of said forwardly facing ends and including a hook, wherein each hook is configured to engage a lower edge defined by the vehicle component.

36. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 10, wherein said frame includes a pair of upright sections, a cross-member which interconnects the upper ends ~~of~~ defined by said upright sections and is provided with means for mounting the equipment-carrying structure, curved lower sections extending from the lower ends of the upright sections, and terminating in forwardly facing ends, and a hook carrying member mounted to each of said forwardly facing ends and including a hook, wherein each hook is configured to engage a lower edge defined by the vehicle component.